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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MASERU 000634

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [OFDP](#) [ASEC](#) [KDEM](#) [LY](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: LESOTHO: FOREIGN MINISTER ON ELECTIONS, EXPULSION OF LIBYAN ENVOY

REF: A) MASERU 621 AND PREVIOUS; B) STATE 202711

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CLASSIFIED BY: W. Patrick Murphy, CDA, a.i., EXEC, DOS.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶11. (C) Summary: Foreign Minister Moleleki told Charge on December 29 that he fully supports and welcomes USG-funded election activities. He expects the political opposition will have difficulty accepting election results, because "they will be lucky if they win only one or two seats." Moleleki signed out former cabinet member Tom Thabane, leader of the new ABC opposition party, as a supporter of political violence, but allowed that it was "nearly impossible" to provide absolute evidence. Moleleki said that he had ordered the expulsion of the Libyan Ambassador for "funneling huge sums of money" directly to the "criminal Thabane," including an attempted delivery of roughly \$150,000 in cash, but described the former envoy as a "lone wolf" who had attempted to manipulate Lesotho politics, but had not damaged Lesotho-Libya bilateral relations.

End Summary.

CONDOLENCES AND RESPECT

¶12. (U) Foreign Minister Moleleki, during a visit to the chancery on December 29 to sign a condolence book for former President Ford, met with the Charge for 45 minutes to exchange views on recent developments. Moleleki, who said that he was a student in Moscow during the Ford Administration, observed that "like President Nixon before him, President Ford was greatly admired overseas, perhaps much more so that at home."

WASHINGTON TRIP: "GET THE COMPACT"

¶13. (C) FM Moleleki said that he had come to the chancery directly from a meeting with Prime Minister Mosisili, whom he had briefed on his recent trip to Washington to seek progress on achieving a compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). Moleleki apologized for not giving the Embassy advance notice of his Washington visit, explaining that the Prime Minister had convoked him on December 10 (as the FM arrived at the airport from a Sudan trip) and instructed him to fly immediately to the United States to join the Minister of Finance in undertaking all efforts to achieve a compact signing as soon as possible.

ELECTIONS: "WE WILL MOP THE FLOOR (WITH THE OPPOSITION)"

¶4. (SBU) Charge, noting that Moleleki had discussed election issues with A/S Frazer in Washington (ref B), briefed the FM on election activities planned, or already underway, with the USG-funded National Democratic Institute (NDI). Moleleki said he was particularly pleased to hear about a proposed candidate debate, a pre-election assessment mission planned in January, and post-election reform proposals.

¶5. (C) Moleleki opined that the political opposition would have a difficult time accepting election results, predicting that the All Basotho Convention (ABC), led by former cabinet member Tom Thabane, would be "lucky if they win one or two constituencies (out of 80 directly-elected parliamentary seats)." The FM suggested that if the opposition (a total of 18 parties) formed a broad alliance, it could compete more evenly with his governing LCD. "They are incapable, however, of joining together in a coalition," Moleleki added, "so I predict we will mop the floor with them."

VIOLENCE AND THE LIBYAN CONNECTION

¶6. (C) Moleleki said that he hoped the NDI, and other NGOs working on elections, would inform Thabane, as well as other leading opposition figures, "that their clear support for violence, including assassination attempts against me and the Minister of Trade, is wholly unacceptable." Charge noted that if there was solid evidence of such support, the GOL should be more transparent and forthcoming with results of investigations.

Moleleki responded that it was nearly impossible to provide absolute evidence, highlighting the investigative shortcomings of the Lesotho police. He emphasized that "there is no doubt that Thabane has threatened the use of violence if election results are not to his liking."

¶7. (C) Expanding on his accusations against the ABC leader, Moleleki said that he had ordered the expulsion of the Libyan Ambassador in mid-December (ref A) because the Libyan had been "funneling huge sums of money" directly to the "criminal

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Thabane." He said that the "final straw" occurred when GOL immigration authorities recently discovered a Libyan Embassy courier arriving at the Maseru airport with over one million Maluti (roughly \$150,000) in cash. "We could not arrest him due to diplomatic immunity," said Moleleki, "but that was one delivery too much."

¶8. (C) The Foreign Minister demurred on whether the Libyan cash was actually delivered to Thabane, but claimed that previous payments had reached the former minister. Moleleki said that he had been in regular touch with the Libyan Foreign Minister on the matter, concluding that the Libyan Ambassador had been a "lone wolf" in seeking to influence Lesotho politics and there was therefore no harm done to Lesotho-Libya bilateral relations.

Moleleki added that he had invited the Government of Libya to send investigators to Lesotho so that "we can show them the evidence, and they can then pursue criminal charges against the former Ambassador."

COMMENT: WITH CONFIDENCE

¶9. (C) FM Moleleki has been on international travel for the better part of two months, but is now clearly seized with domestic matters. He acknowledged that there is much to be done within Lesotho on making forward progress with the MCC compact, but admitted that February elections will be a preoccupation over the coming weeks. He expressed considerable confidence in his governing LCD party, and his own prospects for re-election, suggesting that even a coalition of the entire opposition could not unseat him from his constituency. End Comment.

MURPHY